

18.

## Halloween Around the World



SUBJECT: COMMUNITY  
INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

- Mexico
- USA and Canada
- Scotland
- Czech Republic
- Germany
- Austria
- Portugal
- Japan
- Guatemala
- The Philippines

Name:

Read and discuss the notes, taking note of the similarities and differences to your own cultural customs.

Halloween is a very old holiday that is still celebrated in countries around the world today. Each country, community and family has its own interesting set of customs and traditions, just like Ireland.

Halloween is a shortening of the words “All Hallows’ Evening.”

Halloween dates back to the ancient Celtic holiday of *Samhain*. Beginning thousands of years ago, the Celts would mark the end of the harvest season and beginning of winter on this day and also believed that the seasonal transition was a bridge to the world of the dead.

Ireland is typically believed to be the birthplace of Halloween.

Trick-or-treating evolved from the ancient Celtic tradition of putting out treats and food to placate spirits who roamed the streets at *Samhain*.

## MEXICO

Children in Mexico go trick-or-treating on Oct. 31, but it is a primer for another celebration: *el Día de los Muertos*, or *Day of the Dead*, which takes place on Nov. 1 and 2. Observers say the Mexican holiday, which dates back 3,000 years to pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, occurs when the gates of heaven open, allowing the spirit of a deceased loved one to be reunited with their still-living family.

Family members may prepare a feast with the deceased’s favourite foods or leave gifts on their graves. Festival-goers will put on skull masks and eat skull-shaped sweets. And the holiday, once typically celebrated only in rural, Indigenous parts of the country, is now celebrated in major cities, including the capital, Mexico City.



Day of the  
Dead Parade in  
Mexico City

## USA AND CANADA

Many children in the United States and Canada dress up in costumes and go trick-or-treating in their communities.

Carving Jack O'Lanterns and decorating homes with pumpkins, scarecrows, and corn stalks are other popular traditions.



**New York City/USA - October 24, 2020: Halloween decorations in Upper West Side, Manhattan, NYC.**

## SCOTLAND

In Scotland, children cut scary faces into hollowed-out turnips, rutabagas, or potatoes and place a candle inside.

*Dookin' for Apples* is a game played at children's Halloween parties. The idea is to grab apples that are floating in a tub of water using your mouth, with your hands tied behind you. Or, trying to catch the apples with a fork!



## CZECH REPUBLIC

In the Czech Republic, All Souls' Day is celebrated on November 2. *Dusicky* ("little souls") is a day to honour the dead by visiting graves, lighting candles, and laying flowers.



All Souls' Day at a cemetery,  
Czech Republic

## GERMANY

In Germany, Halloween is celebrated as All Saints Day – honouring the saints, as well as family members who have died. People hide their knives to avoid harm to returning spirits!

A popular Halloween site in Germany is the 1,000-year-old fortress ruins in Darmstadt known as Burg Frankenstein. (It is believed to be the castle that inspired the novel, *Frankenstein*.) Carving pumpkins and dressing up in costumes are also becoming more popular.



Burg Frankenstein in Germany

## AUSTRIA

Austria celebrates *Seelenwoche*, or All Souls' Week, from October 30 – November 8. It is a time to remember loved ones who have passed away.

Before going to bed, people leave bread, water, and a lighted lamp on a table to welcome dead souls. The following day, families gather with lanterns to lead the dead to the graveyards. Church bells ring at noon, signalling the release of the souls to move on.

## PORTUGAL

In Portugal, kids don't dress up in costumes, but they do go door to door on the morning of November 1.

Children knock on the doors of their neighbours, but instead of calling out "trick-or-treat," they say "*Pão-por-Deus*" (say, "pow pour Dee-us"), which means "bread for God."

In return, they're given small toys, candy or breads.

## JAPAN

Japan is the home of the Kawasaki Halloween parade, where nearly 4,000 people from all around the world get together to dress up and join in the parade.



**Kawasaki Halloween  
Parade, Japan**



## GUATEMALA

Guatemalans also honour the dead during the first couple days of November. During the *Barriletes Gigantes*, or "giant kites" festival, Guatemalans fill the sky with massive, colourful kites.

The kites — which can go up to 40 feet in the air — are often hand-painted, and flown over the graves of loved ones who have passed away. The kites are said to represent a bridge between the living and the dead.



Giant Kite Festival, Guatemala

## THE PHILIPPINES

During the Filipino version of Halloween, known as *Pangagaluluwa*, children pass from house to house offering a song in exchange for food, sweets or money. The meaning of this tradition is that the kids sing for the souls of those who are still in purgatory to help them to go to heaven.